

6 February 1956

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Dear Doctor DeBakey:

You have asked me to supply you with some information on previous attempts made to obtain a new building for the Armed Forces Medical Library. This I am glad to do; I am only sorry that it is not possible, within a reasonable period of time, to do as thorough a job as would be desirable. This is because no coherent recital of these events is in existence; the story which follows I have had to piece together as best I could from many files, at once voluminous and fragmentary. Difficulties also arise because the problem of obtaining a new building has been complicated and at times obscured by two other matters: 1) the problem of physical location of the building, alternately determined as the Mall, Capitol Hill, Walter Reed, Bethesda, and other areas; and 2) the problem of the place of the Library in the government structure -- as early as 1897 there was a movement to move the Library to the jurisdiction of the "National Museum" and in 1914 (and to a lesser degree in 1931) there was a strong movement to move the Library to the jurisdiction of the Library of Congress (these examples will serve, although there are more.).

Clarity will perhaps be favored if we consider events in rough chronological order. We may start by noting that the present building was completed in 1887, and that as early as 1901 John Shaw Billings was remarking (in a speech at the dedication of the Boston Medical Library) that "just now the Army Medical Library is in urgent need of shelving for its additions, some of which are being stored in window sills or on the floor." He suggested that members of the Massachusetts delegation in Congress might be stimulated to urge the appropriation of \$9,000 for this shelving. As you can see, nothing has changed except the price.

WORLD WAR I PERIOD. You will recall the oil painting, dated 1918, purporting to be a picture of the new Library building, which formerly hung in The Surgeon General's office and now hangs in mine. On 5 December 1917 Surgeon General Gorgas wrote the following note to the Secretary of War: "I request that an estimate be made of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) for the purpose of making up plans and specifications for the new building for the ARMY MEDICAL MUSEUM AND LIBRARY, photographic copies of the plans herewith." This request was disapproved in January 1918. The matter did not stop here; an act of July 2, 1919 (41 Stat 122) appropriated \$350,000 under

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the title Land for Hospitals and Other Purposes "for the purchase of land contiguous to Walter Reed General Hospital, District of Columbia, 26.9 acres more or less, for the final location of the Army Medical Museum, The Surgeon General's Library, and the Army Medical School, and for the improvements now on the land to be purchased." /Source: letter dated 23 January 1930, Patrick J. Hurley, Secretary of War, to Chairman, Public Buildings Commission./ I cannot readily determine just why this movement proved abortive.

**EARLY THIRTIES.** In June 1931 the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association adopted a resolution favoring transfer of the Army Medical Library to the Library of Congress. On 6 November 1931 the Secretary of War wrote a letter to the President of the Senate, stating the opposition of the War Department to the proposal. On 21 November 1932 it was reported that "proposed legislation for including in the War Department legislative program, 2d Session, the authorization of Library and Museum building at the Army Medical Center was disapproved on account of financial conditions." In June 1933 the AMA House of Delegates adopted a resolution urging construction of the Library at the Army Medical Center. In 1933 there was proposed an allotment of \$2,086,000 from Public Works funds to erect the Library building at Walter Reed, and this proposal was approved by Mr. Douglas, Bureau of the Budget, in a memorandum to the President. In October 1933 plans for the building were prepared, and a request for funds was made. But in December 1933 a letter from the Administrator of Public Works stated that action was to be deferred because of lack of funds, but that the project would be placed on the preferred list. As late as March 1937 we learn that the "project (now \$2,492,500) is now with G-4." Here the project merges into the next phase.

**LATE THIRTIES.** In 1938 the 75th Congress, 3d Session, passed HR 10455 and S 3919 (52 Stat 684; Congressional Record 28 April 1938), bills authorizing a new building for the Library and Museum, at a cost not to exceed \$3,750,000. In 1940 the 76th Congress, in the Act of 13 June 1940 (Public Resolution No. 611; HR Report No. 1912, p. 16) appropriated \$130,000 for plans for the new building. In 1941 an amendment (55 Stat 731) was passed authorizing an additional \$1 million - bringing the total authorized to \$4,750,000; the additional money was for acquisition of a site on Capitol Hill. In late December 1941 we find Colonel Jones, then Director of the Library, writing to a correspondent that the sum of \$4,500,000 in the budget would have been approved but for the advent of the war.

**POST-WORLD WAR II.** In 1946 the Army Medical Department included in the budget request for FY 1948 funds for the construction of a new building; Mr. Tracy Voorhees, then Special Assistant to the Secretary of War, informed a correspondent that "however, budget severities to which the War Department is now being subjected make it extremely difficult to provide funds for this purpose in next year's War Department budget." On 8 March 1948 Surgeon General

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R. W. Bliss requested that the budget for FY 1949 include \$16,000,000 for a new building; on 29 March 1948 the Army Engineers made a new estimate of \$17,200,000. About this time the Hawley Board was recommending that the Library be budgeted as a "civil function" of the Army, and on 30 September 1949 Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson wrote to former Surgeon General of the Army Charles R. Reynolds that "consideration is being given to requesting the General Service Administration to budget for the construction of a new Library building." A little later the Department of Defense Management Committee, under the chairmanship of General McNarney, recommended transfer of the Library outside the Department of Defense. Your own paper, which appeared in the Bulletin of the Medical Library Association for April 1951, is the best summary of these events available.

PERIOD 1952 to PRESENT. Following recommendations to the Secretary of Defense (then General Marshall) by a special committee of the National Research Council, the Army Medical Library was, in May 1952, redesignated (by then Secretary of Defense Lovett) the Armed Forces Medical Library, a joint agency of the Department of Defense under Army management control. A new drive for construction of a building began immediately; this culminated last summer with the passage of Public Law 219, 84th Congress, signed by the President on 4 August 1955, which included the appropriation of \$350,000 for plans for a new Armed Forces Medical Library building. On 1 December 1955 I learned that the Secretary of Defense had decided that construction funds for the building would not be included in the Defense Department budget for FY 1957, and that on the basis of this decision apportionment of the \$350,000 planning funds already appropriated would not be asked for.

This is the story up to now, in crude outline; I only wish it were possible to flesh it out in all details. Dr. Schullian of our staff has already begun a history of the Library, planned for appearance on our 125th anniversary in 1961, and this is certainly one theme that will deserve extensive treatment.

With kindest personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

FRANK B. ROGERS  
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Director